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Executive Summary

The focus of the review was to provide insight into the factors that encourage collaboration among local councils and those that might hinder it. Three research methods – a scan of some key literature, some small scale qualitative research with seven council participants and a survey of local councils – were employed during the first half of 2009 to look into these factors. In relation to the survey, all 85 regional, city or district councils were invited to participate in the survey and 53 (or 62%) responded within the allowed timeframe.

Key drivers of inter-council collaboration

Findings from all three research methods employed support the idea that key drivers of inter-council collaboration are fiscal constraints (the requirement to achieve more with fewer resources) and higher expectations of citizens, customers, and the councils themselves relating to council services. Councils that responded to the survey ranked ‘to reduce or contain the costs of council services’ as their most important motivating factor for collaboration (81%), followed by ‘to improve council services’ (77%), and ‘to meet higher public expectations in line with implementation of new legislation setting higher standards ...’ (65%).

Less than half of respondent councils indicated that they were motivated by a desire to attract skilled and experienced staff, ‘as an alternative to amalgamation with other councils’, or by a desire to help address problems related to climate change and global warming.

Factors encouraging inter-council collaboration, shared service delivery & planning

A common theme running through the findings of the scan and the qualitative research alike was the importance of the personal qualities of individuals to the success of inter-council collaborations. The personal qualities of individuals tended to be viewed as of greater importance than the governance and structural arrangements put in place to support the collaboration.

The survey findings reflect those of the qualitative research in that the top three initiating and sustaining factors of inter-council collaboration of survey respondents were the quality of inter-council working relationships, communication and council leadership as provided by council Chief Executives.

The quality of the leadership from Council Chief Executives was perceived as being of greater importance than that from the Mayors/Chairpersons in initiating and sustaining inter-council collaboration.

The Local Government Act 2002 does not direct councils to collaborate with each other or set reporting requirements about collaboration undertaken, rather it encourages them to do so where it is appropriate¹. It is therefore not surprisingly that survey respondents did not consider the provisions of

¹ One of the principles relating to local authorities set out in of the Local Government Act 2002 states “a local authority should collaborate and co-operate with other local authorities ..... to promote or achieve its priorities and desired outcomes, and make efficient use of resources” Section 14 (1)(e).
Factors hindering inter-council collaboration, shared service delivery & planning

Survey respondents rated ‘Council leadership not supporting or promoting collaboration’ as the top barrier to inter-council collaboration (93%). They rated ‘Councils operating in an insular way and taking a parochial approach’ (90%) as the next highest barrier to inter-council collaboration.

The scan, participants in the qualitative research and the survey revealed that factors that hinder inter-council collaboration and factors that encourage it, appear to be two sides of the same coin. They point to the importance of leadership, particularly the leadership of council Chief Executives, in setting the scene in which fruitful inter-council collaboration can occur.

The role of inter-council collaboration in the near future is expected to increase

Inter-council collaboration is continuing at a pace. The top five areas in which respondent councils were most likely to have collaborated with other councils were in relation to: provision of community information (77%), procurement processes (76%), geospatial information (74%), management of waste (71%), and in the development of their vision for their LTCCPs (69%).

Over seven in ten (72%) of respondent councils expect both formal and informal collaborative activities to increase over the next year, while just over half (55%) and one quarter (28%) expect collaborative activity to increase with government agencies and NGOs respectively.

The top five areas that councils saw as potential candidates for some/more collaboration were geospatial information (53%), procurement processes (50%), field services (47%), management of waste (45%), and in other areas (43%).
1 Introduction

The Local Government and Community (LG&C) Branch of the Department of Internal Affairs (DIA) commissioned a review of collaboration among local councils in New Zealand as part of a larger evaluation of the Local Government Act 2002 (the Act) and to provide an understanding of council good practice. This report is the product of that request.

In contrast to other areas of interest, such as Maori engagement and participation, the Act makes no specific requirements for councils to actually undertake or report on collaboration. Rather, one of the principles relating to local authorities in the Act

Under Section 14(1)(e) of the principles, councils are required to consider that in performing its role “a local authority should collaborate and co-operate with other local authorities and bodies as it considers appropriate to promote or achieve its priorities and desired outcomes, and make efficient use of resources.”

1.1 Focus of this review

The focus of the review is on providing insight into the factors that encourage collaboration among local councils and those that might hinder it. The key research questions for the review were set out in the areas of service delivery and planning, shared work programmes, community outcomes, the Local Government Act, the private sector and good practice.

In relation to service delivery and planning the questions were:

- How do local councils share services with each other? Plan with each other?
- What processes or tools do local councils use to facilitate shared service delivery? Shared planning?
- What benefits do local councils derive from shared service delivery? Shared planning?
- What barriers do local councils identify around shared service delivery? Shared planning?

In relation to shared work programmes they were:

- How do local councils develop and participate in the shared work programmes?
- What role do the shared work programmes play in developing relationships between local councils?
- Has joint involvement in the shared work programmes contributed to the development of any other kind/s of relationship between local councils? If yes, how?
- How do local councils value the shared work programmes?
In relation to community outcomes the question was:

- What role do community outcomes play in developing relationships between local councils?

In relation to the Local Government Act 2002 the questions were:

- What role has the Local Government Act played in developing the relationship between local councils? Changing the relationship between local councils?
- Have relationships developed with local councils outside the region as a result of the Local Government Act?

In relation to the private sector they were:

- How and why are local councils working with the private sector?
- What does the private sector understand about local councils?

And in relation to good practice the questions were:

- What good practices (or a set of successful and innovative procedures or strategies) are there for New Zealand on: shared service delivery between local councils? Shared planning between local councils?

1.2 Review stages
The review was undertaken in three stages:

- stage one: scan of key literature
- stage two: small scale in-depth qualitative research with a small number of local councils; and
- stage three: survey of all councils.

Details relating to the qualitative research and survey of councils are in Appendix 1.

1.3 Report structure
The structure of the Report follows the review stages, reporting the findings of each in a separate Chapter. The Report ends with some analysis and discussion of the research questions.
2 Scan of key literature

2.1 Introduction

Stage one of the review involved a scan of some key literature. This Chapter:

- summarises some relevant documents and research findings on collaborative activity and arrangements between local authorities, and between local authorities and other agencies (such as central government agencies and not-for-profit community organisations);
- references some examples of joint or shared services arrangements between local authorities in New Zealand that are likely to be relevant for data collection associated with Stages Two (in-depth qualitative research) and Three (a survey of councils); and
- describes features of the methodology of the various studies where these are thought likely to assist in the development of the methodology and research tools for Stage Three (a survey of councils).

This should be considered as a literature scan, rather than a comprehensive review of the relevant literature. Only recent selected literature was considered, mostly from New Zealand. Individual pieces of research are discussed in the following sections.

2.2 The extent of inter-council collaboration in NZ

Surveys of 86 local authorities were carried out in 2003/04 and 2004/05 (Department of Internal Affairs (2005)) to monitor governance arrangements and other council processes, including collaboration between councils. The 2003/04 survey was designed to benchmark the operation of local authorities before the Local Government Act 2002 came into force, with the 2004/05, and subsequent surveys, designed to monitor responses to the legislation.

More recently, the Local Government Commission contracted Colmar Brunton (2008) to undertake an on-line survey of councils to gain an insight into council views of, and experience with the Local Government Act 2002, including Section 14 relating to collaboration and co-operation. Seventy six (89%) councils completed the survey.

In response to the question “Does [council] collaborate with any other councils in its region to meet any of its obligations under the Local Government Act 2002?” the following responses were observed:

- 88% of respondent councils replied that they did collaborate with other councils.
- 63% indicated that they collaborated with other councils for the purposes of monitoring community outcome,
• 53% indicated that they had done so for the purposes of identifying community outcomes.\textsuperscript{2} with regional councils appearing more likely to respond that they collaborated with other councils in this area.

2.3 Nature of inter-council collaborations in NZ

2.3.1 Joint arrangements

Section 12 of the Local Government Act 2002 permits local authorities to engage in joint undertakings, a joint activities, or co-operative activities. The Office of the Auditor General (2004a) selected 12 case studies (see Table 2.1) to examine a variety of joint arrangements between local authorities working together at that time. These arrangements included:

• sharing staff between local authorities;
• joint procurement;
• combined planning; and
• co-operative delivery of services.

Table 2.1 Case studies of 12 joint arrangements (Local Authorities Working Together report)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Case Study</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Brief Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Our Way – Southland Project</td>
<td>Environment Southland, Southland District Council, Invercargill City Council, and Gore District Council.</td>
<td>The four Southland local authorities agreeing to work together on a shared vision for their Long Term Council Community Plans.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Regional Council Information Technology Consortium.</td>
<td>Horizons*, Waikato, Taranaki, Southland, West Coast and Otago Regional Councils.</td>
<td>Information technology database modules specifically designed for Regional Councils.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared Staffing in Taranaki</td>
<td>South Taranaki District Council and New Plymouth District Council.</td>
<td>Two staff from New Plymouth District Council seconded part-time to South Taranaki District Council.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning the Wairarapa Coastal Strategy</td>
<td>Wellington Regional Council, Masterton District Council, Carterton District Council, South Wairarapa District Council, and the two Wairarapa Iwi – Rangitaane o Wairarapa and Ngati Kahungungu ki Wairarapa.</td>
<td>A working party set up to prepare an agreed coastal strategy for the Wairarapa Coast.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.1 cont.

\textsuperscript{2} The question asked ‘Does [council] work with other councils in its region to identify or monitor community outcomes?’ Tick all that apply. Response options were: Yes, to identify community outcomes; Yes, to monitor outcomes; No; Unsure/don’t know.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Case Study</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Brief Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amalgamation of Rural Fire Services</td>
<td>Southland District Council, Invercargill City Council, Gore District Council, the Department of Conservation Southland Conservancy, and Southern Plantations (a consortium of forest owners).</td>
<td>An agreement between five organisations, including three local authorities, to establish a combined Southland rural fire district.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Auckland Libraries Smarter Systems Project</td>
<td>Auckland City Council, Manukau City Council, North Shore City Council, Rodney District Council, and Waitakere City Council.</td>
<td>An agreement between five local authorities to collectively evaluate the costs, benefits, and feasibility of a consortia purchase of a replacement library management system.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Auckland Traffic Management Unit.</td>
<td>Auckland City Council, North Shore City Council, Manukau City Council, Waitakere City Council, and Transit New Zealand.</td>
<td>An arrangement to integrate the traffic control systems of each participant.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canterbury Sharing of Energy Management Expertise.</td>
<td>Christchurch City Council and Hurunui District Council.</td>
<td>An arrangement for Christchurch City Council to provide energy management expertise on a cost-recovery basis to a smaller, rural council.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-Local Government in the Auckland region</td>
<td>North Shore City Council, Auckland City Council, Auckland Regional Council, Manukau City Council, Rodney District Council, Waitakere City Council, Franklin District Council, and Papakura District Council.</td>
<td>A working party was set up to coordinate and monitor progress of the Auckland region’s E-Local Government vision.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information Technology Outsourcing Arrangements.</td>
<td>Opotiki District Council and Environment Bay of Plenty.</td>
<td>An arrangement for Environment Bay of Plenty to provide information technology support to Opotiki District Council.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water Services Integration in Wellington.</td>
<td>Wellington City Council and Hutt City Council.</td>
<td>A joint unit that manages water services for the two local authorities.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Horizons Regional Council is the trading name of the Manawatu-Wanganui Regional Council.
Based on an analysis of the case studies a brochure (Office of the Auditor General, 2004b) offering guidance was produced on how local authorities could identify opportunities and prepare proposals for working together. The brochure provides the following guidance:

- A supportive environment within local authorities is needed for working together;
- Joint arrangements should to be carefully planned, and deliver value for money; and
- In managing joint arrangements local authorities need to:
  - understand each other’s objectives, priorities, timetables and working style;
  - reach agreement on how they will work together, including how decisions will be made and how differences will be resolved;
  - establish governance arrangements that provide policy direction, accountability requirements, project oversight, and control of resources;
  - involve councillors where joint arrangements have implications for the community or for inter-council relationships; and
  - determine the most suitable structure and (in some circumstances) legal form of the joint arrangement.

### 2.3.2 Shared services arrangements

Shared service arrangements involve joint service delivery or capacity sharing across local authorities. Such arrangements are thought to provide a ‘major opportunity’ for providing more effective service delivery for local communities. The expected gains include ‘increased operational efficiency through economies of scale, in others it may be more effectively utilizing scarce skills, or the ability to sustain higher levels of service than might otherwise be possible’ (NZ Society of Local Government Managers, 2008).

The *Shared Services Across Local Government* conference held in Wellington in April 2007 aimed to promote the sharing of knowledge and learning across the local government sector about the design and implementation of shared services arrangements between councils.

Twenty case studies of NZ shared services initiatives were presented at the conference. The case studies were grouped into five streams of four case studies each. The case studies are presented in Table 2.2.

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Table 2.2</strong> Case studies of 20 shared services initiatives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Case studies within the regulatory stream:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managing flood risks on the Thames coast (Environment Waikato and Thames-Coromandel District Council)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Wairarapa combined district plan (Masterton, Carterton and South Wairarapa District Councils)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The development of common dog control policies and bylaws across the Auckland region (involving the Auckland Regional, Rodney, North Shore, Waitakere, Auckland, Manukau, Papakura and Franklin councils)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hamilton City development manual (six councils surrounding Hamilton City).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Case studies within the infrastructure stream:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capacity – Wellington water management Ltd (involving Wellington and Hutt city councils)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Canterbury regional landfill – Kate valley (involving the formation of a public/private partnership and involving five councils – Christchurch, Hurunui, Waimakariri, Selwyn and Ashburton councils and two private companies)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nelson regional sewerage business unit (a joint venture between Nelson City and Tasman District councils)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combined tendering for roading contracts (involving Hauraki and Thames-Coromandel District Councils).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Case studies within the corporate stream:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared valuation database services (13 Waikato territorial authorities and Environment Waikato)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northland rating forum (Northland Regional Council, and Far North, Whangarei and Kaipara District Councils)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future Taranaki (a strategic partnership for achieving community outcomes between the New Plymouth, Stratford and South Taranaki District Councils, and the Taranaki Regional Council)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smartgrowth (for managing growth in the Western Bay of Plenty sub-region – Tauranga City Council).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Case studies within the IT stream:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local government after hours shared service (involving nine councils, including regional, city and district councils)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taranaki Regional Xplorer (a collaborative GIS solution between the Taranaki Regional Council and the Stratford and South Taranaki District Councils)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syndicated purchasing of network printers, multi function machines and copiers (Christchurch City Council and other South Island local authorities working together to achieve significant cost savings from Ricoh)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anyquestions.co.nz – an online reference service for all NZ school students (the National Library, six city libraries, one district library and the Ministry of Education).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Case studies within the services stream:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elgar’s smarter systems project (five Auckland libraries from the Auckland, Manukau, North Shore, and Waitakere City Councils and the Rodney District Council)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social housing partnership (a partnership between Housing New Zealand Corporation and the Christchurch City Council)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World Health Organisation Safe Community (Waimakariri District Council &amp; ACC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solid waste management in Taranaki (three local authorities in Taranaki).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The first conference speaker, Michael Ross, Chief Executive of the Waitaki District Council, described these case studies as ‘an excellent start’ but called for the need to make more progress regarding shared services arrangements and a whole range of related issues. He identified some key drivers for further use of shared services as including:

- the challenge of attracting people to local government with the necessary skills and expertise, particularly those with specialist knowledge and expertise who were needed in an increased range of areas;
- higher public expectations in line with the implementation of new legislation setting higher standards (such as the Building Act 2004 which requires building inspectors to have a higher level of technical knowledge and expertise than previously);
- pressure for greater standardisation across the metropolis and the region;
- climate change and global warming;
- a desire to improve services, and to reduce or contain costs;
- a wish to strengthen and retain local democracy and governance;
- a desire to sustain the council’s operational future;
- pressures from citizens calling for not only improved services but also good quality and reliable services; and
- a desire to stave off calls for [costly] amalgamation of councils.

In Local Government New Zealand’s briefing (2008) to the incoming government, it made mention of shared services as operating among local authorities on ‘all scales and levels.’ The briefing expressed the view that such arrangements were more likely to exist at a service level rather than at a policy or planning level and that more could be done to encourage councils to explore the viability of further shared service options.

2.3.3 The Auckland experience

In 1999 the Auckland Chief Executives Forum (the Forum) considered the possibility and appropriateness of using shared services among their councils. The Forum viewed local government co-operation and collaboration as a ‘continuum of shared service development’ (Shared Services – Councils of the Auckland Region, 1999). A continuum that:

- started with the standardisation and centralisation of services within individual councils;
- graduated to regional co-operation involving the standardisation of some parts of process and technology shared services; then
- moved through to formalised sharing of processes, technology and structure at sub-regional levels or even beyond the region to other public or private sector entities and to perhaps the national level.
The Forum described shared services as being similar to a ‘Star Alliance’ model in terms of the benefits they offered councils (elected members and staff) and rate payers in the Auckland region.

The Forum identified key drivers for further co-operation among councils in the Auckland region as being:

- fiscal constraints – the requirement to achieve more with less resources;
- community demands – higher expectations of citizens and customers;
- urban growth and a demographic shift into the Auckland region that would accelerate growth and place additional pressure on infrastructure;
- a desire to reduce duplication of costs and investments;
- opportunities for cost savings – greater co-operation could release economies of scale and joint capacity building; and
- significant changes in technology that raised opportunities for a collective approach and ‘shared entry’ price arrangements.

The aim of the 1999 shared services initiative was not to control all collaboration within the Auckland region, but to further encourage a culture of collaboration among the Auckland councils and to identify those services which had the potential to migrate over time to the more formal end of the shared services continuum. The primary emphasis of this shared services initiative was to focus on those services that had:

- the potential to develop into a formal shared service; and
- a service delivery or management orientation rather than a policy development dimension.

Using explicit evaluation criteria the initiative identified 12 services/processes as candidates for shared services:

1. geographical information systems (GIS) (access to geospatial data)
2. procurement processes
3. billing (rates, water and payment for licenses, consents, facility hire)
4. community information/call centres
5. payroll (processing of staff salaries and other related payments)
6. sharing and benchmarking customer research
7. human resources
8. consent processing (property information, processing and issuing consents)
9. administration of property management for council owned property
10. traffic flow management
11. field services (animal control, parking enforcement, noise control, security, health and liquor licensing etc, print media, radio, TV, call centres) and

12. core financials (accounts payable, accounts receivable, month end, reporting).

Ten years on, the Royal Commission on Auckland Governance (2009) observed that while there had been some co-operation between Auckland’s regional council and its seven territorial authorities to coordinate and share services, and in the preparation of a regional policy for Auckland, the region’s history of implementation of voluntary joint recommendations was ‘one of missed opportunities with few tangible results.’

Barriers to collaboration between Auckland councils the authors enunciated included a ‘lack [of a] collective sense of purpose, constitutional ability, and momentum to address issues effectively for the overall good of Auckland. Disputes appear to be regular among councils over issues such as urban growth and the development and sharing of key infrastructure (including roads, water and waste facilities, and cultural and sporting amenities). The councils do not appear to have been able to apply, consistent standards and plans.’ (Executive Summary to the Report, paragraph 18).

2.4 Other examples of council collaboration in NZ

A report by Local Government New Zealand (2000) identified some of the drivers of collaboration between councils, and with central agencies and sector groups as being:

- councils wanting to find more effective ways of meeting community needs and dealing with community problems, especially so-called ‘wicked issues’\(^4\) where the problems are unclear and where solutions go beyond the mandate and expertise of a single agency.
- councils wanting to reduce ‘silos’ (and contribute to ‘horizontal policy-making’);
- councils wishing to pool resources to allow greater flexibility in funding;
- councils wanting to reduce costs;
- councils wanting to draw on a wider pool of knowledge and experience as well as other institutional resources;
- councils wanting to increase their effectiveness by tapping into a wider pool of resources and information; and
- councils wanting to increase their legitimacy by enhancing links with local networks and building greater consensus towards common goals.

Prior to the enactment of the Local Government Act 2002, Local Government New Zealand (2000) also commissioned a survey of councils to determine the extent to which they worked collaboratively with central government and other sectors, such as the business and not-for-profit sector. Sixty six

\(^4\) Examples of wicked issues are unemployment, community safety, urban poverty and inter-generational illiteracy.
(or 76%) of councils responded to the postal survey. Guided by the following definition of collaborative relationships as

“Involving different parties agreeing on similar objectives and choosing to contribute their time and resources (their unique characteristics) to working together to achieving those objectives”

the researchers found a good deal of evidence of all types of councils (regional, metropolitan, provincial, unitary and rural) engaging in collaborative relationships with central government and/or other sectors. The structures for these collaborative relationships included:

- within formal structures in which a particular council took the lead role (for example, elected members and staff of a metropolitan council led a Agenda 21 sustainable development initiative);
- within formal structures in which a particular council took a participatory role (for example, staff of a regional council participated on a traffic safety co-ordinating committee); and
- informally around particular issues (for example, staff of a rural council attended three-monthly regional district licensing agency meetings with public health professionals and the police to network ideas and issues on liquor consumption).

Councils were also asked their views about key requisites and obstacles to effective collaboration with central government and other sectors. Among the key requisites they identified were:

- a clear articulation of the goal, objectives, decision making processes and expected outcomes of the collaboration, and of participants’ roles and responsibilities within it;
- a clearly identified level of human and capital resources required to develop and maintain the collaboration;
- a clear commitment to achieve a common goal by all participants with the appropriate mix of skills, experience and seniority;
- a motivated leader with the ability to create a collaboration based on mutual trust and where participants didn’t pull rank;
- participants with a solution-focused orientation and a willingness to discuss issues openly;
- regular communication among all those involved in the collaboration; and
- space to review the ‘health’ of the collaboration.

Not unexpectedly, the obstacles they mentioned were largely the antithesis of the key requisites they identified for effective collaboration.
Coggan and Gabites (2007) undertook a case study describing how the Wellington City Council entered into successful collaboration with central government (Police) and others, including providers in the not-for-profit sector on a specific project. The approach to the collaboration included:

- conceptualising community safety as being linked to injury prevention, crime prevention, alcohol misuse, road safety, water safety and violence prevention;
- developing policies that encouraged successful partnerships and networks among individuals, organisations and providers operating within these spheres; and
- identifying the Safe Communities model as creating a useful infrastructure for the building of successful partnerships between people within these spheres and providing access to the experiences of like communities throughout the world.

The collaboration resulted in Wellington City being accredited as a WHO Safe Community in 2006.

Vester (2008) undertook some research with the aim of determining how the local government and education sectors might usefully work together. She articulated the drivers for a changed way of the two working together as including:

- growing international emphasis on the importance of networks in the development of well-being; and
- a recognition that cross-cutting policy issues (such as inter-generational illiteracy) can only be dealt with through more holistic and more localised approaches.

Her research findings suggested a model for engagement between the local government and education sectors as “consist[ing] of levers which constitute a kind of ‘community governance’ for promoting community well-being through education.”

### 2.5 Australian examples of councils collaboration

*The Future of Local Government Summit 3* held in Melbourne in June 2007 show-cased some Australian examples of inter-council collaboration. The features and experiences of three examples are summarised below.

Uralla Shire Council in New South Wales (NSW) is part of the New England Strategic Alliance of Councils (NESAC) which comprises four councils and a land authority. The Alliance operates under a charter which sets out agreed arrangements for the management and delivery of 14 shared services and is supported by a common IT system. The councils have adopted a shares services organisation structure in which 90 of the total staff of over 500 in the four councils will fill positions in shared services teams delivering services for all member councils.

Cabonne Council in NSW is part of the Wellington Blayney Cabonne (WBC) Strategic Alliance of three rural councils. The Alliance was created in 2003 in response to the NSW Government’s push for structural reform. It operates on the basis of voluntary co-operative arrangements, makes joint
purchases, and shares staff and resourcing. The presenter considered the Alliance was a highly successful and extremely efficient alternative to council amalgamation.

Hornsby Shire Council in NSW is part of the G5 syndicate, consisting of five Sydney metropolitan councils (Hornsby, Lake Macquarie, Parramatta, Randwick and Wyong) that jointly developed and implemented a quality shared technology platform hosted by a third party. The interesting thing about this initiative is, that the councils do not share boundaries.

Other examples of continuous improvement, co-operation, and use of shared services arrangements among rural and metropolitan councils in Victoria were provided from the Summit.

2.6 Findings from the United Kingdom

Research undertaken by the Tavistock Institute (2006) in the United Kingdom to identify and assess social, economic, organisational, technological, cultural and political key issues and trends of relevance and the impact of these on local public services and local governance concluded that by 2015 it would be necessary to think about services more strategically. The authors envisaged that what would be required by 2015 was ‘a more engaged relationship between the individual and the state and a step change in the degree of collaboration between all the key players at a local level.’ They were also of the view that ‘the need for collaboration, integration and shared focus provided by Local Strategic Partnerships, Local Area Agreements and Local Public Service Boards will become more rather than less important.’

2.7 Chapter summary

Eighty eight percent of councils responding to a 2008 survey replied that they were collaborating with other councils to meet at least one of its obligations under the Local Government Act 2002. The scan also revealed a good deal of evidence that councils were also engaging in collaborative relationships with central government and other sectors.

The literature scan identified examples inter-council collaboration from a diverse range of areas. Collaboration appears to be occurring at all levels (service delivery, policy and planning) with service-related projects the most common area of inter-council sharing. Shared council services include library services, after hours’ services, procurement services, IT support services, valuation database services and solid waste management.

Common key drivers for inter-council collaboration include fiscal constraints (the requirement to achieve more with fewer resources) and higher expectations of citizens, customers, and the councils themselves relating to council services.

A common key requisite for effective inter-council collaboration was a clear articulation of the goals of the collaborative activity, related decision making processes and structures, and of participants’ roles and responsibilities. Other key requisites include having a clearly identified level of human and capital resources required to develop and maintain the collaboration, a motivated leader, regular communication, and space to review the ‘health’ of the collaboration.
Barriers to effective inter-council collaboration were largely the flipside of the key requisites for effective inter-council collaboration. Barriers to collaboration among Auckland councils were noted as a lack of a collective sense of purpose, constitutional ability and momentum to address issues effectively for the overall good of the region.
3 Findings from the Qualitative Research

It is about the people involved. Their motivation. About relationships. Seeing the value in the propositions. Not about structure.
(Local Council Research Participant)

3.1 Introduction
This chapter presents the findings from a small piece of qualitative research undertaken as part of this review. The main purpose of this work was to provide in-depth information about a small number of councils, the findings of which would inform the development of the research instrument for the survey (see Chapter 4).

Research was undertaken with staff from four councils, the Greater Wellington Regional Council, Palmerston North City Council, Horowhenua District Council and Masterton District Council. These councils were selected to reflect the diversity of councils across the Lower North Island in terms of type, size and local community (see Appendix 1 for details of the methodology).

3.2 Extent and nature of engaging with other councils
All participants talked about instances in their work area and other work areas where their council engages with other councils. The engagement ranged from sharing information to consultation to joint planning and provision of shared services. The amount and type of engagement and the structures put in place to support engagement reflected the nature of the work area and number and type of stakeholders involved.

One participant reported that around 120,000 emails pass between local authorities each month and they felt that this was an indication of the significant amount of talking, sharing and potential collaboration going on.

Another participant talked about local authority staff routinely asking each other queries and exchanging information using the local government website (http://www.localgovt.co.nz/site/LGOL/discussion_and_mailing_lists/default.aspx).

All participants discussed examples of actively working and collaborating with other councils. Examples ranged from a regional strategy through to shared services for, for example, building consents and after hours contact services.

The following sections summarise what was reported in terms of the perceived drivers of collaboration, the ways of thinking or operating that support collaboration and the barriers or issues faced in collaborating with other councils. They draw on the examples of collaboration discussed by participants and also what they reported in terms of ‘failed’ attempts at collaboration.
3.3 Facilitators and barriers to collaboration

3.3.1 Recognition of positive outcomes drives collaboration

The drivers for collaborating with other councils on a particular initiative or service tended to reflect recognition that working together would result in one or more of the following positive outcomes for the councils involved. The drivers identified included:

- saving money or getting better value for the money spent
- better outcomes (better quality services)
- better use of resources especially limited resources and specialist skills/expertise
- increased efficiency and flexibility and reduced duplication/wasted effort
- more effective management of issues or risks such as a lack of capability or capacity
- more consistent policies and practices
- development and sharing of best practice.

One participant felt that the drivers for working together are not always cost related, but more outcome related. This participant noted a couple of joint initiatives which they felt were possibly more costly due to collaboration, however they would result in better quality outcomes.

A couple of participants also noted that while a joint initiative may be more cost-effective in the long term, it can be more expensive in the short term.

A challenge is that there can be huge costs involved once you get into the details so some things have to be about gradual change. Initial costs tend to be high and the benefits are a long way downstream.

3.3.2 Ways of thinking and operating facilitate collaboration occurring

Some participants felt the fact that councils can achieve positive outcomes through working together (as outlined above) is not necessarily enough to ensure that councils actually do actively work together.

All of the participants highlighted ways of thinking or operating at an organisational and/or individual staff level which they felt facilitated or supported collaboration occurring. These were as follows:

- leadership from the top (politicians, mayors, chief executives, senior management)
- openness to recognising the potential benefits of collaboration and focusing on the end result
- willingness to work with others and to share power and influence
- recognition that what one council does can have an impact on another council and that councils need each other
• taking a strategic and common sense approach to planning for the future and the use of resources

• operating with good will, good communication and a desire for positive relationships.

The following quotes reflect the flavour of comments from participants.

Politicians can influence. Senior Management can influence through setting expectations, setting the tone. .... Leadership can result in culture change.

Sometimes it takes time for all parts of an organisation to catch up with that.

... works on the basis of equal power and influence. X has no greater or lesser power than the other councils. ... Takes humble leadership to make it.

Leaders need to pick the right people at each level. People with good people skills, good communication skills.

A lot of it is cultural, relationships and the will to work collaboratively.

I’ve only been here for 6 months in the role but it seems that there is more collaboration and cooperation now. It is the people in the roles that make it. Getting egos out of the way and focusing on what we’re here for. Not being too precious.

New faces around the table and a realisation that we are all doing the same thing 74 different ways so there are efficiency gains if we work together.

A common theme from participants was the importance of the personal qualities of individuals, rather than structures or legislation.

One participant felt that while individuals - particularly leaders - are significant in making collaboration happen between councils, once councils are working together this creates its own momentum so that this way of working increases over time and is sustained into the future. This happens through, for example, the building of relationships, the creation of a new culture, individuals seeing the benefits of collaboration. This same participant also felt, however, that it is important to put controls and mitigation measures in place to ensure the future of a collaborative initiative.

Timing is important. Having the right personalities is important. The enthusiasm of X has been key. Once things are underway it creates its own impetus.

One participant also talked about the language used as being important in creating and sustaining collaboration, for example using words like ‘hosting’ rather than ‘leading’.

Most participants felt that structure or legislation played a relatively minor role in creating collaboration. It was felt that while it may be useful to promote the principles and benefits of collaboration, it is not possible to ‘legislate’ for collaboration.
Behaviours are the behaviours we choose. Can’t legislate for them or create them through structures. Can set rules and boundaries but doesn’t necessarily make a difference. It is attitudes and behaviours that matter.

Have to respect that in local government, communities drive priorities. Sharing doesn’t always work. But where willing and see the benefits, we should pull together. It won’t work if you require it. Collaboration can’t be achieved by an Act.

Some participants talked about concerns about amalgamation in light of the recent review of Auckland local authorities. These participants felt that the desired outcomes can be and are being met in other regions without amalgamation. Indeed, a number of participants felt that councils were increasingly collaborating with each other, and that there is more talk and activity around the provision of shared services. One participant felt that as relationships between staff in councils develop, it will become easier and easier to collaborate over time.

Lots of shared services is happening already. And there is a timeframe for increasing shared services. Procurement, waste management, emergency management and building consents are the four areas which have been identified for immediate action.

Collaboration is occurring more than ever. Expectations are rising about how quickly things can be done.

One participant talked about having been involved in council work for a long period of time and felt that things go in cycles. Their view was that if councils start to worry about amalgamation they may ‘close up again’ and collaboration will be reduced.

A number of participants acknowledged that each council operates in a different context and collaboration may not always be appropriate or useful. It was regarded as important that councils do not cede their ability to make decisions at the local level.

3.3.3 There are a variety of barriers to collaboration

All participants had experienced barriers in setting up collaborative initiatives with other councils. Sometimes these barriers had been resolved, other times they had not. To some extent the barriers identified by participants reflect the inverse of ways of thinking or operating at an organisational and/or individual staff level which participants felt facilitated or supported collaboration occurring.

Key barriers they identified were as follows:

- Leadership in another council not supporting or promoting collaboration.

- The attitudes and approach of other councils:
  - operating in an insular way and taking a parochial approach (not recognising the impact that they may have on other parts of the region)
  - being more focused on patch protection and fears of amalgamation than the benefits of collaboration
o a desire to maintain own decision making

o not taking a long term strategic approach to planning and use of resources

o a lack of openness to recognising the benefits of collaboration

o perception amongst bigger councils that they will end up having to do the bulk of the work and provide the most resources

o bigger councils seeing themselves as a ‘big fish’ and not concerned with working with the ‘smaller fishes’

- The attitudes and approach of individual staff in other councils:

  o personality type

  o seeing collaboration as making things more difficult with more people involved and more complicated lines of responsibility and accountability

- Councils working under different constraints:

  o to different time-frames

  o to different policies and processes

  o to different day-to-day work pressures

  o to different resources and capacity

  o to different communities views, needs and priorities.

  *Each council has own politics, in own phase, own head of organisation, own processes etc. So it’s complex.*

One participant considered it was difficult to go to ratepayers to ask for money to put into something that was happening in another council area. This was felt to act as a constraint on the degree and type of collaboration.

Another participant mentioned an instance where staff had perceived a joint initiative as threatening and likely to result in a loss of jobs. A change management approach was used to address these views and the benefits of the initiative were promoted to staff. Communication and talking through the barriers was regarded as a key strategy to addressing barriers.

Some participants talked about problems which can arise once a collaborative initiative has been set up. These included:

- difficulties in deciding who funds what (at the outset and over time)
• high initial costs with the benefits downstream

• changing expectations, for example, around service level (there can be service expectation creep from either party)

• councils working under different constraints (as outlined above), for example:
  o there may be a desire for joint procurement of a service but councils may have existing contracts in place which end at different times
  o entrenched systems in councils which make it difficult and more expensive at the outset to engage in collaborative initiatives

• potential for growing resentment by a council if they feel that other councils are ‘piggy backing off them’ too much.

One participant felt that while it can be more effective to work together, it is harder than when doing things on one’s own as there are more people involved, it’s more complicated and sometimes there are less clear lines of responsibility and accountability and it tends to take more time.

### 3.4 Influence of community outcomes

Participants were asked about the role they thought the community outcomes identified in the Long-term Council Community Plans (LTCCPs) play in developing relationships between local councils.

Participants tended to view community outcomes as either largely irrelevant or somewhat problematic in developing relationships with other councils. The following quotes reflect the flavour of comments from participants.

*The X councils share similar outcomes with local variations. Because they are fairly generic they probably reflect what we would do anyway whether the outcomes were there or not.*

*Not sure if community outcomes from the 10 year plan made a difference to this collaborative approach for ... when it was being set up.*

*Community outcomes are problematic. When doing the ... they were a good vehicle for conversation at a high level but not useful in terms of specifics. Opportunity to have conversation across councils but how meaningful they are in terms of making a difference is doubtful.*

*...the community outcomes are irrelevant as would have to find the ones we can share. What might be important to council A might not be to council B. Need common areas of interest.*

One participant talked about an unsuccessful attempt by a number of councils to develop a set of community outcomes for the wider region. In the end, the group set up for this purpose decided that councils would develop separate community outcomes but would use the regional group to talk more about processes and best practice.
It was also agreed that members of the group would help each other with monitoring and the group allocated one council the responsibility of putting in a joint request on behalf of all councils to central government agencies to get monitoring information. Reasons given for the proposed joint approach proving to be problematic were that councils working to different time-frames, had different day-to-day work pressures and were mindful that the resulting monitoring information could miss the required local flavour for each council involved.

3.5 Influence of the Local Government Act

The Local Government Act does not compel councils to collaborate but rather encourages them to do so where it is appropriate. Participants were asked about the role they thought the Act played in developing and/or changing relationships between local councils within and outside of the region.

Opinion was divided as to role they thought the Act had played. Some participants felt that the Local Government Act had not had a significant impact on developing relationships with other councils. Some participants felt other pieces of legislation made more of a difference to interaction with other councils in relation to their specific work area. The following quotes reflect the comments of participants.

*Never had cause to refer to the Local Government Act with other TLAs. When putting LTCCP together we talk to strategic partners but generally government agencies rather than other TLAs.*

*Local Government Act – we’re more driven by the Civil Defence Act and other Acts.*

*Local Government Act hasn’t made a difference in this instance because this comes under the Building Act. The Local Government Act may have encouraged more collaboration in other parts of the council.*

Some participants considered that while the Act promoted the principle of collaboration among councils, in itself it did not actually make collaboration happen. Other factors were much more powerful motivators for collaboration among councils. A couple of comments were:

*The behaviour of collaboration has become so normalised it is hard to see where the Local Government Act starts and ends. Cultural norms in the council now are for collaboration. Refer to LGA when looking at what have to do and when need to tick things off. Useful to have boundaries but what is important is people, attitude, cultural. But can’t legislate for behaviour or best practice.*

*It is not the Act that specifically achieves councils working together but draws it to attention. The Act points us to say if an opportunity arises to collaborate then we should try to work together. Increased collaboration reflects changes in the times rather than the Act. Collaboration is driven by smaller councils recognising that costs are rising and there is a need to be innovative and to keep costs down.*

A couple of participants noted a small number of differences they felt the Local Government Act had made. These included helping to:
• widen the number of councils that any particular council has a strategic relationship with
• develop a common language around common processes and making best practice easier
• spell out the distinction between governance and management roles
• make the role of the Chief Executive Officer clearer
• make more explicit each council’s role in the social and cultural life of their area.

3.6 Working with community and private sector groups

Participants were asked about how they and their council worked with community and private sector groups, the drivers for this, processes involved and any issues arising. Participants talked about relationships with community and private sector groups tending to focus on consultation, information sharing and coordination rather than more active collaboration – although more active collaboration does sometimes occur. Having good networks in place to support consultation, information sharing and coordination was important.

A couple of participants noted that councils can advocate and provide a strategic lead but are often dependent on community and private sector groups for putting strategy into action. A small number of examples of collaboration with community and private sector groups were noted by participants. These were as follows:

• a major regional initiative in the textile industry. An umbrella group has been created which involves the council and the private sector. Both the council and the private sector contributed funding to the initiative and work together to a shared terms of reference.

• council having a contract for bus services, but will collaborate with the bus company on particular events.

• an Emergency Management Committee involving a number of stakeholders (including Neighbourhood Support, Gas, Power, Ministry of Social Development, Child Youth and Family, the Salvation Army, Defence, Fire, Ambulance, Housing Corporation and Massy University) that meets every quarter. The Committee shares information and training opportunities. Members of the Committee regard the Committee as collaborative and were very positive about it in a recent survey.

One participant talked about building-related legislation appearing to constrain relationships with the private sector which they felt was restrictive and frustrating. This participant felt that within current legislation there is not a lot of room for collaboration with the community and private sector.

Another participant felt that collaboration with community and private sector groups can be complicated as it sometimes requires going back and forth to council to get approval.
3.7 Chapter summary

Participants in the small scale qualitative research perceived the drivers of inter-council collaboration to include a desire for saving money (or getting better value for the money spent), better quality services and outcomes, better use of human resources, increased efficiency and flexibility and reduced duplication, more effective management of issues, more consistent policies and practices, and for the development and sharing of best practice.

All participants highlighted ways of thinking or operating at an organisational and/or individual staff level which they felt facilitated or supported collaboration occurring. A common theme from participants was the importance of the personal qualities (leadership, open mindedness, strategic thinking skills, good communication skills) of individuals, over governance or structural arrangements supporting the collaboration.

Key barriers that the participants identified included leadership in one of the councils not supporting or promoting collaboration, negative attitudes among councils and individual staff members, and councils operating under different constraints (time-frames, policies and processes etc).
4 Findings from the Survey Research

4.1 Introduction

This Chapter presents the findings from the survey of councils undertaken as the final stage in this review. All 85 regional, city or district councils were invited to participate in the survey. Fifty three (or 62%) councils responded within the allowed timeframe. Based on the achieved sample size for estimates of proportions, the maximum sample error is ± 8.3% at the 95% confidence level.

Some number of councils that responded to the survey (or ‘respondent councils’) did not necessarily respond to all the survey questions. The number of respondent councils that answered a specific question is noted in the text. The percentage is generally calculated using a denominator of those respondent councils that answered a specific question.

Four respondent councils were regional councils, five were city councils and 25 were district councils.\(^5\)

Four councils served populations of more than 120,000 people, 13 councils served populations between 20,000 to 120,000 people, and 17 councils at less than 20,000 people.\(^6\)

Twenty respondent councils were in the North Island, and 13 in the South Island.\(^7\)

Due to the varying number of responses to the various questions and a research design suited to examining single questions, the analysis is univariate and excludes cross-tabulations.

4.2 Areas of collaboration among local councils

Councils were first asked a general question about their extent of collaboration with other councils. They were asked to indicate on a scale from 1 (none) to 5 (a lot) how much they collaborated. Just over four in ten (41%) responded that they collaborated ‘a lot,’ nearly three in ten (29%) rated the extent of their collaboration a ‘4’, one quarter (25%) rated it a ‘3’ and six percent a ‘2’. No councils returned a response of ‘none.’

Councils were then asked to indicate whether or not they collaborated with other councils on each of 18 broad topic areas by choosing from one of the following response options: ‘yes - formally’, ‘yes – informally’, ‘no’ or ‘don’t know.’

The combined proportions of those councils responding either ‘yes – formally’ or ‘yes – informally’ to each of the topic areas are shown in Table 4.1.

\(^{5}\) Nineteen of the respondent councils did not answer this particular question. These numbers compare with total numbers of regional, city and district councils of 12, 16 and 57 respectively.

\(^{6}\) Nineteen of the respondent councils did not answer this particular question.

\(^{7}\) Twenty of the respondent councils did not answer this particular question.
Table 4.1 Percentage of respondent councils that had collaborated with other councils (by activity area)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Areas</th>
<th>Yes %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provision of community information</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Procurement processes</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geospatial information</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management of waste</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development of vision for LTCCPs</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library services</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research services</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field services</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consent processing</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Billing processes</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management of water supply</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human resources</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operation of a call centre</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management of traffic flow</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration of council-owned property</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Core financials</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Payroll processing</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The number of councils that responded to each of these areas ranged from 18 to 39.

The top five areas in which respondent councils were most likely to have collaborated with other councils were in relation to: provision of community information (77%), procurement processes (76%), geospatial information (74%), management of waste (71%), and in the development of their vision for their LTCCPs (69%).

The bottom five areas were in relation to: operation of a call centre (38%), management of traffic flow (36%), administration of council-owned property (13%), core financials (13%) and payroll processing (5%).

Figure 4.1 shows the same percentages for the top and bottom five areas, but also showing a breakdown of the percentages in terms of collaboration type – formal compared with informal. The formal/informal split varied with the type of area.
Twelve (or 30%) of 40 councils that responded to the question ‘Does your council share staff with another council?’ indicated that they did. The number of staff shared varied from one to 25. Of those councils that did, shared staff were the most likely to work in library services (four responses), field services (four responses) and consent processing (three responses).

### 4.3 Expectations of the direction of collaboration

Over seven in ten (72%) of respondent councils expected both formal and informal collaborative activities to increase within the next year. Just over half (55%) expected collaborative activity to increase with government agencies while just over a quarter (28%) expected collaborative activity to increase with non-governmental organisations (Table 4.2)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Within the next year ...</th>
<th>increase</th>
<th>stay the same</th>
<th>decrease</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>formal collaborative activities with other councils</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>informal collaborative activities with other councils</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>collaborative activity with govt agencies</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>collaborative activity with NGOs</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The number of councils that responded to each of these areas ranged from 36 to 39.
4.4 Motivating factors for collaboration

Next, on a five point scale ranging from ‘1 (not at all important)’ to ‘5 (very important)’, councils were asked to rank the importance of ten factors to council collaboration. Table 4.3 shows the importance of these factors to councils. To be important a council needed to rank a factor as either a ‘4’ or ‘5’.

Respondent councils’ ranked ‘to reduce or contain the costs of council services’ as their most important motivating factor for collaboration (81%), followed by ‘to improve council services’ (77%), and ‘to meet higher public expectations in line with implementation of new legislation setting higher standards ...’ (65%). Less than half of respondent councils indicated they were motivated by a desire to attract skilled and experienced staff, ‘as an alternative to amalgamation with other councils’, or by a desire to help address problems related to climate change and global warming.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>Important %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To reduce or contain the costs of council services</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To improve council services</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To meet higher public expectations in line with implementation of new legislation setting higher standards (such as the Building Act 2004)</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To meet pressure for greater standardisation across the region</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To strengthen local democracy and governance arrangements</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To sustain a council’s operational future</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To respond to pressure from citizens calling for good quality and reliable services</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To attract people to local government with the necessary skills and expertise</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As an alternative to amalgamation with other councils</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To help address problems related to climate change and global warming</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The number of councils that responded to each of these factors ranged from 30 to 31.

4.5 Initiating factors for collaboration

Next, on the same scale ranging from ‘1 (not at all important)’ to ‘5 (very important)’, councils were asked to rank the importance of 14 factors to initiating council collaboration. Table 4.4 shows the importance of these factors to councils. (Again, to be important a council needed to rank a factor as either a ‘4’ or ‘5’.)

Respondent councils’ ranked the quality of the working relationships (97%), lines of communication (97%) and leadership from the Council Chief Executives (94%) as being key initiating factors for collaboration. The quality of the leadership from Council Chief Executives (94%) was perceived as being of greater importance than that from the Mayors/Chairpersons (78%).
Table 4.4  Percentage of respondent councils that rated various factors as important in helping initiate council collaboration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors that help initiate collaboration</th>
<th>Important %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relationships between the people involved</td>
<td>97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good lines of communication</td>
<td>97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership from Council Chief Executives</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Openness to recognising the benefits of collaboration and focusing on the end result</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willingness to work with others and to share power and influence</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taking a strategic approach to planning for the future and to the use of resources</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A desire for positive relationships between councils</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership from the Mayors/Chairpersons</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognition that what one council does can have an impact on another council</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The governance arrangements</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orientated around a particular project with funding tied to it and of fixed duration</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choice of language, for example, using 'hosting' rather than 'leading'</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provisions of the Local Government Act 2002</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The number of councils that responded to each of these factors ranged from 9 (for ‘Other’) to 32.

4.5  Sustaining factors for collaboration

Next, on the same scale ranging from ‘1 (not at all important)’ to ‘5 (very important)’, councils were asked to rank the importance of the same 14 factors to sustaining council collaboration. Table 4.5 shows the importance of these factors to councils. (Again, to be important a council needed to rank a factor as either a ‘4’ or ‘5’.)

The top three sustaining factors - the quality of the working relationships (100%), lines of communication (93%) and leadership from the Council Chief Executives (90%) – were the same as the top three initiating factors. Again, the leadership from Council Chief Executives (90%) was perceived as being slightly more influential than that from the Mayors/Chairpersons (80%).
Table 4.5 Percentage of respondent councils that rated various factors as important in helping sustain council collaboration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors that may help sustain</th>
<th>Important %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relationships between the people involved</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good lines of communication</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership from Council Chief Executives</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Openness to recognising the benefits of collaboration and focusing on the end result</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The ability to take a strategic approach to planning for the future and to the use of resources</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A desire for positive relationships between councils</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership from the Mayors/Chairpersons</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willingness to work with others and to share power and influence</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognition that what one council does can have an impact on another council</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The governance arrangements</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orientated around a particular project with funding tied to it and of fixed duration</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provisions of the Local Government Act 2002</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choice of language, for example, using 'hosting' rather than 'leading'</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The number of councils that responded to each of these factors ranged from 6 (for ‘Other’) to 30.

4.5 Hindering factors for collaboration

Councils were asked to rank the importance of 15 factors as hindering council collaboration. Table 4.6 shows the importance of these factors as barriers to council collaboration. Again the same five point scale was used, and to be an ‘important’ barrier a council needed to rank a factor as either a ‘4’ or ‘5’.

The top two barriers were perceived to be ‘Council leadership not supporting or promoting collaboration’ (93%) and ‘Councils operating in an insular way and taking a parochial approach’ (90%).

Conflicting time-frames (45%), policies and processes (45%), resources and capacity (45%) and different day-to-day work pressures were perceived by less than half respondent councils as being important barriers. Negative staff attitude towards collaboration and larger councils perceiving that they would contribute a disproportionate amount to collaboration were ranked lowest.
Table 4.6 Percentage of respondent councils that rated various factors as important in hindering council collaboration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors that hinder collaboration</th>
<th>Important %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Council leadership not supporting or promoting collaboration</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Councils operating in an insular way and taking a parochial approach (not recognising the impact that they may have on other parts of the region)</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A desire to maintain own decision making</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A lack of openness among councillors/staff to recognising the benefits of collaboration</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Councils being more focused on patch protection and avoiding amalgamation</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The personalities of individual staff</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Councils serving different communities with different views, needs and priorities.</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Councils not taking a long term strategic approach to planning and use of resources</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Larger councils seeing themselves as a ‘big fish’ and not concerned with working with the ‘smaller fishes’</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Councils working to different time-frames</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Councils with different policies and processes</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Councils with different resources and capacity</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Councils with different day-to-day work pressures</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff viewing collaboration as making things more difficult with more people involved and more complicated lines of responsibility</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A perception amongst bigger councils that they will end up having to do the bulk of the work and provide most of the resources</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The number of councils that responded to each of these factors ranged from 30 to 31.

4.6 Potential for greater collaboration

The last question in the series about collaboration, asked councils to indicate whether they perceived there was potential for some/more collaboration. As for one of the early questions in the series, they were asked to respond on a scale from 1 (none) to 5 (a lot) how much potential they saw in 18 broad topic areas. To be an area with potential for some/more collaboration a council needed to give a ranking of ‘4’ or ‘5 (a lot)’.

The top five areas that respondent councils saw as potential areas for some/more collaboration were geospatial information (53%), procurement processes (50%), field services (47%), management of waste (45%), and in other areas (43%).

The bottom five areas with least potential according to respondent councils were in relation to: management of traffic flow (23%), core financials (19%), human resources (18%), payroll processing (9%) and administration of council-owned property (6%).
Table 4.7  Percentage of respondent councils that rated various areas as having potential for some/more collaboration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Areas</th>
<th>Potential %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Geospatial information (data, maps and information relating to location)</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Procurement processes</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field services (for example, animal control, parking enforcement, noise control, security, health and liquor licensing)</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management of waste</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development of vision for Long Term Council Community Plans (including community outcomes)</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library services</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Billing processes (for example, of rates, consents, facility hire)</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research (for example, surveying residents’ satisfaction levels or concerns)</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operation of a call centre</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consent processing (property information, processing and issuing consents)</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management of water supply</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provision of community information</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management of traffic flow</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Core financials (accounts payable, accounts receivable, month end, reporting)</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human resources (for example, council recruitment policies and processes)</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Payroll processing (staff salaries and other related payments)</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration of property management (of council-owned property)</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The number of councils that responded to each of these areas ranged from 7 (other) to 33.

4.7 Chapter summary

Just over four in ten (41%) of councils that responded to the survey indicated they collaborated ‘a lot,’ nearly three in ten (29%) rated the extent of their collaboration a ‘4’, one quarter (25%) rated it a ‘3’ and six percent a ‘2’. No councils returned a response of ‘none.’

The top five areas in which respondent councils were most likely to have collaborated with other councils were in relation to: provision of community information (77%), procurement processes (76%), geospatial information (74%), management of waste (71%), and in the development of their vision for their LTCCPs (69%).

Twelve (or 30%) of 40 councils that responded to the question ‘Does your council share staff with another council?’ indicated that they did. The number of staff shared varied from one to 25. Shared staff were the most likely to work in library services (four responses), field services (four responses) and consent processing (three responses).
Respondent councils’ ranked ‘to reduce or contain the costs of council services’ as their most important motivating factor for collaboration (81%), followed by ‘to improve council services’ (77%), and ‘to meet higher public expectations in line with implementation of new legislation setting higher standards ...’ (65%).

Respondent councils’ ranked the quality of the working relationships (97%), lines of communication (97%) and leadership from the Council Chief Executives (94%) as being key initiating factors for collaboration. The quality of the leadership from Council Chief Executives (94%) was perceived as being of greater importance than that from the Mayors/Chairpersons (78%).

The top three sustaining factors - the quality of the working relationships (100%), lines of communication (93%) and leadership from the Council Chief Executives (90%) – were the same as the top three initiating factors. Again, the leadership from Council Chief Executives (90%) was perceived as being slightly more influential than that from the Mayors/Chairpersons (80%).

The top two barriers to council collaboration were perceived to be ‘Council leadership not supporting or promoting collaboration’ (93%) and ‘Councils operating in an insular way and taking a parochial approach’ (90%). Conflicting time-frames (45%), policies and processes (45%), resources and capacity (45%) and different day-to-day work pressures were perceived by less than half respondent councils as being important barriers. Negative staff attitude towards collaboration and larger councils perceiving that they would contribute a disproportionate amount to collaboration were ranked lowest.
5 Analysis and discussion of the findings

The focus of the review was to provide an insight into the factors that encourage collaboration among local councils and those that might hinder it. Three research methods – a scan of key literature, some qualitative research and a survey of local councils – were employed to look into these factors.

Responses to the research questions posed in the Introduction are attempted in turn using the findings from each of the three reach methods employed.

Service delivery and planning

How do local councils share services with each other? Plan with each other?

The literature scan outlined revealed a variety of governance and structural arrangements councils use to support shared service delivery and shared planning across a range of activities. Councils may:

- share services informally;
- form a working group to establish common standards (for example, of a common orthophotography standard across a region);
- share staff capacity or expertise on a cost-recovery basis (for example, of energy management expertise to a smaller rural council);
- develop strategic partnerships (for example, on community outcomes across a region);
- form legally binding joint ventures between councils (for example, for sewerage disposal); or
- form public/private partnerships involving multiple councils and private companies (for example, for management of a region’s landfill).

The small scale qualitative research revealed that the ways in which councils engage with other councils in relation to shared service delivery and planning depends on the nature of the work area and the number and type of the stakeholders involved. Collaboration appears to often begin with informal information exchange or informal consultation, prior to more formal arrangements being established if collaboration is deemed appropriate.

What processes or tools do local councils use to facilitate shared service delivery? Shared planning?

Informal and formal processes and tools (for example, staff secondment, working parties and legal instruments) were used by local councils to facilitate shared service delivery and planning. Participants in the qualitative research used email and the local government website to initiate queries and exchange information in relation to shared service delivery and planning.

Sharing carefully chosen and skilled staff to work with another council was also a means of facilitating shared service delivery and planning. Thirty percent of the councils surveyed had shared staff with
another council. This sort of sharing was most likely to have occurred in the areas of library services, field services or consent processing.

**What benefits do local councils derive from shared service delivery? Shared planning?**

Among the studies scanned, common key drivers of inter-council collaboration include fiscal constraints (the requirement to achieve more with fewer resources) and higher expectations of citizens, customers, and the councils themselves relating to council services.

The views of participants interviewed for the qualitative research complemented the findings from the scan. These participants perceived the benefits of inter-council collaboration on a particular initiative or service as including:

- saving money or getting better value for the money spent;
- achieving better outcomes (better quality services);
- achieving better use of resources especially limited resources and specialist skills/expertise;
- resulting in increased efficiency and flexibility and reduced duplication/wasted effort;
- achieving more effective management of issues or risks such as a lack of capability or capacity;
- resulting in more consistent policies and practices; and
- developing and sharing of best practice.

The views of survey respondents supported the findings of the scan and the views of participants of the qualitative research. According to survey respondents the key drivers of inter-council collaboration are fiscal constraints (the requirement to achieve more with fewer resources) and higher expectations of citizens, customers, and the councils themselves relating to council services. Respondent councils’ ranked ‘to reduce or contain the costs of council services’ as their most important motivating factor for collaboration (81%), followed by ‘to improve council services’ (77%), and ‘to meet higher public expectations in line with implementation of new legislation setting higher standards …’ (65%).

All the qualitative research participants highlighted ways of thinking or operating at an organisational and/or individual staff level which they felt facilitated or supported collaboration occurring. A common theme running among the scan and these participants alike was the importance of the personal qualities of individuals, rather than structures or legislation.

The survey findings reflect those of the qualitative research in that the top three initiating and sustaining factors of inter-council collaboration of survey respondents were the quality of inter-council working relationships, communication and council leadership as provided by council Chief Executives.

The quality of the leadership from Council Chief Executives was perceived as being of greater importance than that from the Mayors/Chairpersons in initiating and sustaining inter-council collaboration.

**What barriers do local councils identify around shared service delivery? Shared planning?**

The scan, participants in the qualitative research and the survey identified similar barriers around shared service delivery and planning.
Survey respondents rated ‘Council leadership not supporting or promoting collaboration’ as the top barrier to inter-council collaboration (93%). This underscores the importance of the first message in the Office of the Auditor General’s brochure (2004b) that ‘a supportive environment within local authorities is needed for working together.’

Survey respondents rated ‘Councils operating in an insular way and taking a parochial approach’ (90%) as the next highest barrier to inter-council collaboration. These survey findings on the top two barriers reveal that factors that encourage inter-council collaboration and those that hinder it are two sides of the same coin. They point to the importance of leadership, particularly the leadership of council Chief Executives, in setting the scene in which fruitful inter-council collaboration can occur.

**Shared work programmes**

*How do local councils develop and participate in the shared work programmes? What role do the shared work programmes play in developing relationships between local councils? Has joint involvement in the shared work programmes contributed to the development of any other kind/s of relationship between local councils? If yes, how? How do local councils value the shared work programmes?*

The research ranged over a number of broad topic areas related to inter-council collaboration. However, research participants in the qualitative research made little mention of shared work programmes specifically. The survey research did not specifically ask about these and survey respondents chose not to provide any additional comments relating to them. Thus, little information was collected with which responses to questions about shared work programmes can be attempted.

Based on the limited information obtained, it is thought that the ways in which local councils developed and participated in shared work programmes were likely to be much the same as the ways in which they developed and participated in shared service delivery and planning, and that shared work programmes were unlikely to feature strongly as a means of fostering relationships between local councils.

It is unclear how councils valued shared work programmes. However 60% of respondent councils indicated that they rated inter-council collaboration as important ‘to meet pressure for standardisation across the region.’

**What role do community outcomes play in developing relationships between local councils?**

Findings from the survey revealed that nearly seven in ten (69%) councils had collaborated either formally or informally with other councils in the development of their vision for their Long-term Council Community Plans (LTCCPs).

When asked about the role of community outcomes in the LTCCPs in developing relationships between local councils, participants in the qualitative research tended to view that they were somewhat problematic. However according to one participant, community outcomes had been a ‘good vehicle for conversation at a high level.’
What role has the Local Government Act played in developing the relationship between local councils? Changing the relationship between local councils?

The Local Government Act does not direct councils to collaborate with each other but rather encourages them to do so where it is appropriate. It is therefore not surprising that the responses of participants in the survey and the qualitative research did not consider that the Local Government Act had played a major role in developing or sustaining relationships between local councils.

Some participants of the qualitative research supported the views of the councils surveyed. They felt that other pieces of legislation with a more specific focus (for example, the Civil Defence Emergency Management Act 2002) had made more of a difference as to how they interacted with other councils in relation to their specific work area.

Other participants in the qualitative research were of the view that while the Local Government Act supported collaboration among councils, in itself it did not make collaboration happen. Other factors, such as costs, were more powerful motivators for collaboration among councils.

Have relationships developed with local councils outside the region as a result of the Local Government Act?

The research did not provide any strong evidence of the Local Government Act having facilitated relationships between local councils operating outside of each other’s region. While the survey did not specifically ask councils whether they thought relationships had developed with other councils outside the region as a result of the Local Government Act, none felt strongly enough to provide additional comments to this effect.

One participant in the qualitative research mentioned that the Local Government Act had helped increase the number of councils that any particular council has developed a strategic relationship with.

How and why are local councils working with the private sector?

The literature scan noted an example of five councils working with two private companies to manage the Canterbury region’s landfill. The parties used a public/private partnership arrangement as the legal framework for the collaboration.

The scan also cited two examples of local councils working together to obtain efficiencies in the procurement of services from the private sector. The councils involved had used combined tendering for roading contracts and syndicated purchasing of machines and computer hardware.

Two examples of collaboration with private sector groups were noted by participants in the qualitative research. One council gave an example of working with the textile industry using a shared terms of reference. Another council gave an example of having an understanding with a bus company to work together to provide transport arrangements for special events. This council already had a contractual relationship for the supply of bus services in the region. In both instances costs were being shared with the private sector. The councils appeared to be motivated by the desire to stimulate and support the local economy and the social and cultural life of their area.
What does the private sector understand about local councils?

There was no indirect evidence from local councils that the private sector was lacking in understanding of council roles and processes (note that this research was not designed to collect information directly from the private sector themselves).

One council participant in the qualitative research was of the view that there was not a lot of room within current building related legislation for collaboration with the private sector. This participant felt that this was restrictive and frustrating. Another council participant thought that council approval processes added to the complexity of council – private sector collaborations.

What good practices (or a set of successful and innovative procedures or strategies) are there for New Zealand on: shared service delivery between local councils? Shared planning between local councils? Triennial agreements between local councils?

Careful consideration of services which have the potential to be delivered as shared services across councils is needed. Not all services are appropriate candidates for sharing among councils. Those which have a service delivery or management orientation are more likely to be delivered as shared services across councils than services which have a policy development orientation.

There is no one successful model of shared planning or shared service delivery. Shared planning between councils may succeed within a variety of governance and structural arrangements (for example, informally, through secondment of staff, or formation of working parties). The same is true of shared service delivery between councils. Shared services may succeed within a variety of formal arrangements (for example, strategic partnerships, joint ventures, or public/private partnerships).

A shared service initiative needs to be carefully planned by the councils involved and be cost effective. The councils need to clearly articulate their expectations of the initiative, agree on its expected aims and outcomes (including quality measures), plan how they will work together (including the involvement of councillors) on the initiative, agree resourcing levels and contributions, and establish appropriate governance and structural arrangements around the initiative.

Careful selection and recruitment of individuals is needed if a shared service initiative between local councils is to succeed. A common theme emerging from the research was the importance of the personal qualities of individuals rather than of governance and structural arrangements. As well as having the appropriate mix of qualifications, skills and experience, the individuals need to have a collective sense of purpose and to be motivated by a desire to work for the greater good to the region.

The role of inter-council collaboration in the near future

All councils that responded to the survey indicated that they were engaging in at least some inter-council collaboration, with the extent of the collaboration occurring across a range of areas varying quite widely. Over seven in ten (72%) of these councils expect both formal and informal collaborative activities to increase over the next year, while just over half (55%) and one quarter (28%) expect collaborative activity to increase with government agencies and NGOs respectively.
The top five areas that local councils saw as potential candidates for some/more collaboration were geospatial information (53%), procurement processes (50%), field services (47%), management of waste (45%), and in other areas (43%).

An increase in inter-council collaboration in New Zealand would be in line with trends in Australia and the United Kingdom. For example, the Tavistock Institute from the United Kingdom expects that the need for collaboration, integration and shared focus between local councils and organisation will become more important.
References


Appendix 1 - Methodology

Qualitative Research

The purpose of this component of the research was to provide in-depth information about a small number of councils and to inform the development of a survey tool to be used in stage three of the research.

Small scale qualitative research was undertaken with staff from four councils – the Greater Wellington Regional Council, Palmerston North City Council, Horowhenua District Council and Masterton District Council. These councils were selected to reflect the diversity of councils across the Lower North Island in terms of type, size and local community.

The Department of Internal Affairs made an initial approach to each selected council to inform each council about the research and to invite them to participate in the research. A researcher then contacted each council to discuss setting up the research.

Originally it was envisaged that a two hour group discussion would be undertaken with 4-6 key staff in each council. Due to work demands facing council staff and practical difficulties in finding a time to bring staff together, councils requested that telephone or face-to-face interviews be undertaken with the staff member or members they nominated to take part in the research.

A discussion guide, which was developed to reflect the key research questions, was used to guide each interview. A copy of the discussion guide is attached in Appendix 1.

At the start of each interview, the interviewer checked that the participant had received an information sheet about the research and/or had been provided with sufficient information from their respective manager. Participants were given the opportunity to have questions answered prior to the interview getting underway.

Seven interviews were undertaken in total (six telephone interviews and one face-to-face interview). Interviews took between 25 minutes and one hour.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Council</th>
<th>Number of interviews undertaken</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Greater Wellington Regional Council</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palmerston North City Council</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horowhenua District Council</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masterton District Council</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Participants held management or senior roles and each had responsibility for a particular area of business/work for their respective council. These areas included civil defence, transport, regulatory services for building work, strategic and corporate services and business development. There was a wide range across participants in terms of depth of experience in working in local government – some had worked in local government for a substantial period of time while others were relatively new to local government. Some of the participants had both public and private sector experience.

While participants could talk in great detail about sharing and collaboration with other councils in relation to their particular area of work, they tended to have more difficulty with discussing in detail how their council engages with other councils more generally. Only one participant operated in a role which allowed that person to have a high degree of knowledge about sharing and collaboration more generally.

Survey Research

All councils were approached to participate in the survey. Contact to recruit interest was by e-mail. A number of councils responded to the recruitment e-mail nominating a key contact person.

The survey questions were deliberately close-ended, with a free text box at the end of the survey in which respondents could add any other comments they wanted to make. Questions used yes/no/don’t know response formats or asked respondents to rate the importance of various factors on a five-point scale, where 1 meant “not important” and 5 meant “very important”.

Following the recruitment e-mail, contact with councils was initiated by phone, to make it easier to ensure that the survey went to the right person. Council staff were told what areas the survey covered and asked to nominate a person who would be able to comment on the council’s activities in those areas. The best person to fill out the survey varied between councils. Sometimes it was a policy manager or communications manager. In smaller councils especially, it was often the Chief Executive.

A mixed delivery method was used. Council representatives were able to choose between a telephone interview and an emailed link that would allow them to complete the survey online. Most preferred the online option, which was quicker and easier to fit around their work schedules.